



## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

The **Institute of African Studies (IAS)** at the **University of Ghana**, with funding support from the **Open Society Foundation**, is calling for applications for **post-doctoral fellowships** as part of the Gender Equitable and Transformative Social Policy for Post-COVID-19 Africa (GETSPA) Project.

### CONTEXT

#### *Background to GETSPA*

At present, the quest for transformative social policy approaches is hampered by the neoliberal foundations of traditional approaches and the patriarchal cultures of policymaking institutions, two problems that result in the lack of policy attention to inequalities related to gender, generation, location and dis/ability, among others. Social policies are invariably reduced to social protection and are rolled out through targeted rather than universal measures. Additionally, there is poor recognition of the interplay between social and economic policies, with economic policymaking given prominence and social policy seen as a way to mop-up those left behind in the quest for economic growth. Finally, there is a dearth of social policy academics in Africa, leading to the privileging of Western-based knowledge as the basis for social policy praxis. African scholars also lack opportunities and resources to undertake research into social policy in other global South contexts and are therefore unable to learn lessons that would enrich social policy in Africa. The GETSPA project is committed to contributing to addressing these obstacles to transformative social policy in Africa.

As an initial step in this transformative social policy agenda, the GETSPA project has undertaken research since November 2020 in thirty-one countries in Africa, to map the landscape and evolution of social policy approaches since the colonial period. These country studies have found that the importance placed on social policies in addressing the developmental needs of Africa has varied over the years. In the colonial period, social policy was pursued with a resource appropriation agenda which resulted in the creation and/or exacerbation of inequalities and structural dualities. The early independence period appears to have been the period of the greatest attention to social policy, when developmental states rolled out broad-based policies to simultaneously address the challenges of nation-building, social and economic citizenship, and economic growth. The devaluation of social policymaking began with the period of economic reforms prescribed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s when public provisioning by the state was rolled back and the market logic was given prominence. While social policy has made something of a comeback in global discourses, it has been reduced to a question of social protection which narrowly focuses on remedial interventions for the “vulnerable”. These are not adequate to address important questions about rising inequalities including gender inequality (related to the gender segmentation of work, the gender pay gap, and the gender asset gap). The period of the pandemic highlighted the limits of the reductive version of social policy to address the crises of poverty, vulnerabilities and inequalities that were deepened during the pandemic, much less the goal of human well-being in its most positive and expansive sense. This realisation offers

an opportunity to rethink social policymaking, signalling an entry point for the transformative social policy agenda of GETSPA.

This call is, therefore, for applications for post-doctoral fellows who will produce research papers that focus on promising initiatives that can lead to the realization of an agenda for transformative and gender equitable social policy for Africa's development.

### ***Approach***

The project takes as its starting point Mkandawire's expansive definition of social policy as the

“collective interventions to directly affect social welfare, social institutions and social relations.... concerned with the redistributive effects of economic policy, the protection of people from the vagaries of the market and the changing circumstances of age, the enhancement of the productive potential of members of society, and the reconciliation of the burden of reproduction with that of other social tasks. Successful societies have given social policies all these tasks, although the weighting of tasks has varied among countries and within each country, from period to period”.<sup>1</sup>

Social policy is thus concerned with social welfare, social institutions, and social relations, and has both instrumental and intrinsic or normative value. This approach to social policy provides a framing for assessing social policy in Africa.

Furthermore, the project takes up gender equity and the transformation of gender hierarchies as an overarching concern. This is to address the lack of interest in the gendered nature of social policy regimes and the gender inequalities in social development across the spectrum of social policy regimes. Although there are increasingly social policy instruments that target women and from which they derive welfare benefits, these do not necessarily challenge gender hierarchies, and may actively reinforce them. The neglect of gender issues in social policy is manifested by unexamined assumptions about the family and household; and the lack of attention to the gender segmentation of employment and the problematic gender norms that underpin paid and unpaid care work and social reproduction. Addressing these gaps in policy making and the policy literature brings issues which are crucial to economic and social development into the conversation on social policy.

The overarching goal of this project is the transformation of the discourses, approaches to and cultures of social policy making and implementation to establish Gender Equitable and Transformative Social Policy approaches in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup>Mkandawire, T. (2011). Welfare regimes and economic development: Bridging the conceptual gap. In V. Fitzgerald, J. Heyer, and R. Thorp (Eds.), *Overcoming the Persistence of Poverty and Inequality*, Palgrave, pp. 149-171; See also Adesina, Jimi O. (2011), Beyond the social protection paradigm: social policy in Africa's development. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 32(4), 454-470

## **THE POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**

The post-doctoral fellowship is an integral part of the GETSPA project to develop and publish papers on pathways to transformative social policies.

### **Focus of the fellowships**

For Phase 2 of GETSPA, the project has selected themes that we consider integral to transformative social policy agenda for Africa.

- Interfaces and synergies of social and economic policy
- Gender equitable social policy
- Political and democratic underpinnings of social policy and citizenship
- Informal social policy systems and practices
- The debt crisis, austerity and implications for social policy
- The influence of the SDGs on social policy in Africa
- Social policies and the AfCFTA
- Financing social policy in Africa
- Lessons for Africa from a comparative analysis of social policy in the Global South
- Neglected areas of social policy

**These themes may provide guidance or suggestions for applicants but are not meant to be exhaustive; applicants are free to focus their proposal on any theme of their choice.** What is most important is that the papers produced during the fellowship period should be forward-looking and should point to promising initiatives and approaches to social policymaking on the African continent. In addition, the selected topic will ideally be related to the applicants' doctoral theses or other prior research.

### **About the fellowship**

- The fellowship is non-residential.
- The duration is 12 months (beginning in July 2024), with the possibility of a renewal for another year.
- Awardees will receive a stipend of USD 8,000.00 annually, inclusive of any expenses related to research or writing.
- The fellowship period will include a study visit at SOAS University of London for 3 months, which will be paid for separately by the project.
- A maximum of three (3) fellowships will be awarded.

### **Responsibilities of post-doctoral fellows**

- Work in a cooperative manner with members of the GETSPA Technical Team, one of whom will be assigned as a primary supervisor.
- Assume primary responsibility for the development of individual research.
- Participate in project conferences and seminars.
- Submit at least two manuscripts for publication per year.

- Assist the lead investigators with literature review and review of project reports.
- Undertake any other tasks assigned by the lead investigators towards the successful completion of the post-doctoral fellowships.

### **Eligibility**

- Applicants must have been submitted their thesis and/or been awarded a doctoral degree from a recognized university within the past 5 years (that is, not earlier than 2018).
- A record of research and/or publications in social policy-related areas in African contexts would be an advantage.

### **Format of Applications**

Applications should be submitted in English and contain the following:

- A CV
- Proof of award of degree or submission of final thesis
- A 3–5 page concept note that
  - presents the applicant’s proposed area of focus for their research/writing, including topic, research questions, theoretical framing and methodology to be used;
  - explains how the applicant intends to use the fellowship period, with a clear timeline of activities and outputs.
- Two letters of reference

### **Timelines**

- Deadline for applications: 25 May 2024
- Notification to successful applicants: 15 June 2024
- Start date of fellowship: 15 July 2024

Submit applications and enquiries to [ro.getspa.ias@ug.edu.gh](mailto:ro.getspa.ias@ug.edu.gh), cc:ed to [pis.getspa.ias@ug.edu.gh](mailto:pis.getspa.ias@ug.edu.gh), with the subject line “**GETSPA post-doc application – [name of applicant]**”.

You will receive an email acknowledgement of receipt of your application. If you do not receive such an email, please resend the application or call/WhatsApp +233 20 956 2427.